



DIOCESAN YOUTH APOSTOLATE



## Healing The Gap With Youthful Passion

Imagine a team of youth on a trip, standing at the base of a tall mountain and looking up. It wouldn't be long before someone says "Let's climb it!" Once they're halfway up, they see a difficult ledge looming over them. Does the trip end there? Doubtful! At least one person in the group would dare everyone else to climb, so they would all join so as not to be left behind and the journey would continue. Now that is a youthful enthusiasm that we can find in all of us. It is the urge to be adventurous, to formulate strategies and face hurdles head on, to overcome setbacks, and to figure out solutions together. We can tap into this enthusiasm to face challenges life brings; for it is possible to find an effective solution, if we can put our minds to it.

These days it is not uncommon to find family members distant from each other, even while living in the same house. Parents and children don't communicate and if they do, it is by yelling and arguing. Family life seems empty, the relationships callous. What is seen here is the disintegration of the bonds that hold families together due to a lack of mutual understanding. Perhaps you have noticed it within your own family but ignored the strains and pretended everything was okay.

Being a parent has its struggles. It can be daunting to think that our children are growing up in a world that bears little resemblance to the one that we are familiar with. We try to raise them the right way, adapting how we were brought up, trying to maintain the values and

ideals we hold dear, while in a new and different society. We yearn to give our kids freedom, but don't know what dangers that could bring.

We set rules and limitations, firmly believing we are doing the best for their kids, but our children turn against them and us. We know that we cannot protect them from everything, so we do everything we possibly can to provide them with what is necessary to succeed.

Children struggle in their own way, beginning with the challenges of reconciling the different expectations of home and school. They feel pressured to live up to the "Indian" standards set by their parents while maintaining an "American" face. They increasingly long to fit in and adopt American culture while spurning the ideals and values that their parents hold. Ideas of success, of right and wrong, among many others, may all be points of contention at home. Additionally, they might feel misunderstood or ignored simply because of how our culture traditionally treats youth.

Almost all of us have faced these challenges as a parent or as a child. Some of us ignored it, while some felt it was not worth the fight or others got completely shattered. That youthful enthusiasm with which we faced other challenges seemed lost. We stood at the bottom of the steep mountain, with no support to encourage us to keep climbing up. But perhaps, things might have been

different had there be others there with us, like our children or other parents in the community. If we stopped pretending that everything was always alright within our families and opened ourselves for support, perhaps the powerful enthusiasm would have returned and we would have had the desire to climb and conquer.

Ideas would pour, activities be designed and concepts explored. Can we as a community make an impact on this seemingly huge and pervasive problem, the problem of misunderstandings within parents and children due to surrounding clashes of culture?

How beautiful would it be, if our families were free of these tensions and pains, if parents understood children and children understood parents? Parents would see beyond their culture,

and children would be able to fully embrace their parents by learning how to incorporate and balance both cultures into their daily lives. Imagine how transformed our churches would be, for the love that builds the walls of the Church would flow from within the families first, as it was intended.

Healing the strains between family members may seem like the steep mountain we encountered earlier but with youthful enthusiasm inside each of us and by supporting those around us, the young and old can be liberated. Then, the impossible will be possible and we can do all things through Christ, who strengthens us.

## Suggested Activities of the Month

1. Families talk about the homily and reflect upon it together
2. Share what you are thankful for as a parent or youth about each other
3. Share faith experiences
  - a) Parents: Talk about what faith meant growing up, how CCD/faith changed your life, and why you feel it's important for your kids.
  - b) Kids: Talk about CCD experiences, what you do and do not like, or why it may not be relevant.
4. Celebrate Thanksgiving in June
  - a) Share a meal together
5. Take a summer break together
  - a) A weekend trip or even just a couple of hours; a trip to a park or beach, whatever gets the family to talk and spend time with each other.

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